In memoriam

Barbara H. Stanley
(13.8.1949–25.1.2023)

The internationally renowned suicide researcher and co-worker at the National Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, University of Oslo passed away January 25th this year after having struggled with cancer over the last couple of years. With this, the field of suicidology has lost one of its most productive and creative researchers.
Barbara was an extremely hard-working person and, as would be so typical for her, she continued to work until the very last few days before her death. It will be hard to find a person to fully replace her in the many roles she had locally and internationally. She was a Full professor of psychology in psychiatry at the Department of Psychiatry, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. She was also director of Suicide Prevention Training, Implementation and Evaluation for the New York State Office of Mental Health and a research scientist at the Department of Molecular Imaging and Neuropathology at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Over many years she served as the editor-in-chief of the journal Archives of Suicide Research and developed this journal into an influential publication for suicidological research. At the time of her death Barbara was also president of the International Academy of Suicide Research and she served in many other roles in the academic and scientific world. Barbara's research focused on clinical populations of suicidal people, how to assess their risk and increase patient safety and improve care. She received international recognition for her work on the Stanley-Brown Safety Planning Intervention, a stepwise self-help tool she developed with Greg K. Brown from the University of Pennsylvania in 2008; this intervention is widely used in Norway and many other countries throughout the world. She published more than 200 peer-reviewed scientific papers and book chapters and left a lasting impression on the field.

Countless are those young researchers who Barbara helped to get on the right track or to connect with the right people. Many more of Barbara Stanley's functions, roles and achievements could have been listed. Countless are those young researchers who Barbara helped to get on the right track or to connect with the right people. She had an extremely large network of contacts; researchers and other professionals with whom she generously shared her knowledge and resources. Here in Norway, we were fortunate enough to be among those with whom she shared her knowledge. For more than a decade she served as a visiting professor at the NSSF and spent a week at the center twice a year, teaching, mentoring and giving us the best she had of new ideas and creative input to everyone who asked for it. With her unique combination of direct, frank, and at the same time supportive, communication she helped us more than once to make the necessary changes and arrive at the right decisions in important strategic issues.

Barbara Stanley is survived by her two children Melissa Morris and Thomas Stanley, a large and loving family, and friends and colleagues all over the world who will miss her dearly. Many of us who work at the NSSF were happy enough to be counted among her friends. We will never forget her and what she was to us; this brilliant, generous, compassionate, and strong woman.

Lars Mehlum